

NOAA Enforcement Uncovers ILLEGAL HARVESTING SCHEME: ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS



INVESTIGATION

NOAA Agents analyzed electronic data to uncover scheme.

Estimated
15,000 Hours
Investigating¹

NUMBER OF PEOPLE INVOLVED

52
Charges

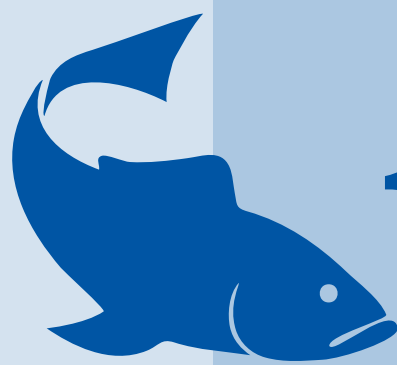
13
Indictments



Annual Trawl Quota 160,160 pounds²
Total illegal profit \$1.1 million

2009

31,306 lbs.
illegally harvested³



2010

102,296 lbs.
illegally harvested³

4 Vessels
Forfeited



The U.S. Attorney's Office initially sought forfeiture of 7 vessels. Ultimately, 4 were forfeited and substitute assets in the amount of **\$124,000** were collected and paid to the U.S. Marshals Service.

Restitution
\$1.23M



The most egregious conspirator was ordered to pay **\$653,795**. All restitution was paid to the U.S. Treasury.

Probation
from fisheries
activity



38.5 years

The average probation sentence was **3 years**.
The maximum sentence was **5 years**.

Community
Service **850 hours**

7 of the 12 Conspirators received community service.
3 were individually sentenced to **6 months** of home confinement.



1. Under federal law, Atlantic striped bass may not be harvested from or possessed in federal waters. This ban on fishing for Atlantic striped bass in federal waters has been in place since 1990. North Carolina allows fishermen to harvest fish from state waters but often limits fishermen to no more than 100 fish per fishing trip. Commercial fishermen are required to report fish harvested from state waters on a fishing vessel trip report; that report is then submitted to NOAA Fisheries. NOAA uses the information on this report to assess the fishery and its sustainability throughout the eastern seaboard.
2. The annual trawl quota is the total catch authorized for the state of North Carolina.
3. The illegally harvested fish were counted against the trawl quota, thereby reducing the amount available for law-abiding fishermen.